



Infection Prevention and You

How to Be a Good (and Healthy) Roommate

It's that time of year again when many young adults are heading off to college for the

first time with new adventures and experiences awaiting them. These new experiences may include having a roommate or using a community bathroom and shower. Unfortunately, personal hygiene may not be a priority for everyone on your dorm floor, so we want to give you some tips on how to be a good roommate and how to stay healthy while away at school..

Don't Let Unwanted Visitors In

Eating late night pizza or any food in your dorm room is a rite of passage. It has to be done. However, avoid keeping pizza boxes, any leftover food, or empty food containers laying around. Leaving these items out can attract unwanted "visitors" (e.g., cockroaches) and possibly bigger things (e.g., mice and rats). Also watch out for bed bugs who are excellent "travelers and hitchhikers." Before putting on your beddings, inspect the seams of your mattress and look for bedbug stains. If you have secured second-hand furniture, inspect it well before bringing it inside the room.

Most of these pests can carry diseases. Keep your room clean to avoid attracting them—and glares from your roommate. Inform the dormitory staff at once if you see any of these uninvited visitors.

Keep Your Germs to Yourself

Sniffles, coughs, sneezes, aches, and chills are just a few symptoms of flu as well as COVID-19. While flu season begins soon after school starts, there is not an established timeframe for the start and stop of COVID-19. Don't wait until you start to feel crummy. Be proactive and get your flu shot as soon as it's available and get vaccinated against COVID-19. If you have received the COVID-19 vaccine, see about your eligibility for the booster.

Getting the flu and/or COVID-19 vaccines take only minutes, and it can save you from missing out on fun college activities. If you do need to cough or sneeze, cough into your elbow or sleeve. If you have mucous, cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw that away. Always remember to wash your hands afterwards. If you do begin to have any flu or COVID-19 symptoms or start to feel sick in any way, seek immediate healthcare from the campus infirmary or go to the nearest emergency care center. Do not go to class. Be up to date on the latest masking requirements in your area and be prepared to isolate if required.

Usually, sharing is caring, but not when it comes to germs. It's okay to share stories, laughter, and even frustrations, but don't share things like utensils, combs/brushes, toothbrushes, razors, and drinking glasses/cups. This will decrease the risk of contracting certain infections such as meningitis, and even help in the protection against lice and the common cold. Another way to help protect yourself and your roommate from meningitis is by getting the MenACWY vaccine.

Sexual inactivity is the best way to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs). However, if sexually active, be sure to use condoms (or other barriers) when engaging in any type of sexual activity.

Fungus and other organisms can grow in shower stalls. If you have a community bathroom, invest in some shower shoes, such as flip-flops or another type of protective water shoe. Otherwise, if you have even microscopic cracks on your feet, you can end up with a fungal or other type of infection.

Staying Healthy: It's in Your Hands

The absolute most important thing you can do to be a good and healthy roommate is to wash your hands! Washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the #1 way to prevent the spread of germs. Encourage your roommate and other college acquaintances to do it, too! Be sure to wash your hands before eating, after using the bathroom, after sneezing, blowing your nose, coughing, if you're around someone who is sick, whenever your hands are dirty, or anytime you think about it. There is never a bad time to clean your hands.

Now get out there and live those new experiences. Just make sure that illness isn't one of them.

More Resources

APIC consumer alert—"Clean your hands often!" https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/clean-your-hands-often/

APIC consumer alert—"Meningococcal disease: What it is and how to prevent it" https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/meningococcal-disease-what-it-is-and-how-to-prevent-it/

APIC consumer alert—"Influenza immunization" https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/influenza-and-pneumococcal-immunization/

APIC consumer alert—"Hepatitis" https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/hepatitis/



The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) is the leading professional association for infection preventionists (IPs) with more than 15,000 members. Our mission is to create a safer world through the prevention of infection.

apic.org
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APIC consumer alert—World AIDS Day: “The time to act is now.”

https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/world-aids-day-the-time-to-act-is-now/

APIC consumer alert—Scabies and lice — How nice! https://apic.org/monthly_alerts/scabies-and-lice-how-nice/

COVID-19. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html#:~:text=CDC%20recommends%20universal%20indoor%20masking,layered%20prevention%20strategies%20in%20place.>

Infection Prevention and You Infographics, APIC.org.

<https://infectionpreventionandyou.org/infographic/>



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